

Obituaries

Robert Howard Kirschner

Forensic pathologist who investigated mass killings in Bosnia and Rwanda

Robert H Kirschner was a forensic pathologist who was hooked on human rights work. His activities took him wherever torture, extra-judicial executions, and mass killings had occurred—to Central and South America, to Europe, the Middle East, and Africa. One of his most prominent cases was the 1996 examination of four sites of mass graves near the Bosnian town of Srebrenica, where Serbs were thought to have slaughtered about 8000 Muslim men and boys. Kirschner worked for awfully long hours, in horrible conditions amid the stench of mass burial. His findings helped contribute to the 2001 conviction of General Radislav Krstic by the International Tribunal in the Hague on charges of genocide.

Kirschner's human rights odyssey began in 1985 when he joined a team formed by the American Association for the Advancement of Science (AAAS) to investigate skeletal remains found after the "disappearance" of more than 20 000 people in Argentina. He helped collect evidence of widespread murder and torture, identified many of the bodies, and trained Argentine students in the techniques of forensic science. His evidence helped convict nine former junta members of human rights violations.

Kirschner was an internationally recognised authority on forensic pathology, human rights violations, police brutality, torture, and child abuse. He was a founding member of the faculty board of the human rights programme at the University of Chicago. In a recent court deposition, Kirschner said that



STATON R WINTER/AP

he had performed more than 8000 autopsies, including approximately 1500 autopsies on victims of gunshot wounds.

Robert Howard Kirschner was of Ashkenazi Jewish ancestry. His parents were schoolteachers who managed to pass on their principles of courage, justice, and freedom to him during the witchhunting McCarthy era of the 1950s. Already an activist as a student, Robert won a journalism award for an article he wrote for his campus newspaper arguing for the abolition of the infamous House Un-American Activities Committee, but the paper refused to publish it.

After qualifying at Jefferson Medical College in Philadelphia, he completed residency training in pathology at the University of Chicago in 1971. He did two years' military service in the United States Public Health Service before joining the faculty at Chicago as an assistant professor in pathology. In 1978, he began to work for the newly created Cook County Medical Examiner's Office as a forensic pathologist, which allowed him to combine medicine with his legal interests.

The following year, while helping to identify the remains of the 273 people killed in the crash of American Airlines flight 191, he met Clyde Snow, a renowned forensic anthropologist. Snow inspired him to become involved in investigations around the world.

From 1985 to 2000 he was involved in 36 international human rights missions at the request of Physicians for Human Rights, the United Nations, the Organization of American States, and the AAAS. This was not without risk; he was arrested, detained, and interrogated by the Kenyan secret police in 1988 when he attended a hearing into the death of a man who died while in their custody.

Kirschner was also recognised for his work on child abuse. He was a founder of the child death and serious injury review team for Cook County, and a member of the advisory board of the National Center on Shaken Baby Syndrome.

Despite the grim nature of his work, he was invigorated rather than depressed. His wit and wisdom helped him become, in the words of the New York medical examiner Dr Michael Baden, "the conscience of forensic pathology."

In a 1996 interview, Dr Kirschner said that dealing with bodies was not the terrifying part of his work. "It's more trying to contemplate what goes through someone's mind that allows them to do this kind of thing," he said.

He leaves a wife, Barbara, an authority on inflammatory bowel disease in children; three sons; and a granddaughter. [FRED CHARATAN]

Robert Howard Kirschner, clinical associate departments of pathology and paediatrics, the University of Chicago Pritzker School of Medicine, and forensic consultant to the United Nations International Criminal Tribunals for the former Yugoslavia and Rwanda (b Philadelphia 1940; q Philadelphia 1966), died from complications of renal cancer on 15 September 2002.

Advice

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Michael Gwynne Douglas Davys



Consultant psychiatrist Chelsea (b Wiltshire 1922; q Oxford 1946; VRD, MA, MRCPsych), died on 12 June 2002 from complications following cardiac surgery.

Michael Davys had a varied practice based in London and Sussex and his patients were an eclectic mixture of writers, painters, actors, aristocrats, and businessmen. As a student in May 1945 he went to Belsen to help with the massive medical problems as concentration camps were freed. His psychiatry career began at Guy's Hospital and then he worked as consultant psychiatrist for the East Sussex Regional Board's Child Guidance Clinic in Brighton. In 1964 Davys established Bowden House, a private psychiatric clinic in Harrow-on-the-Hill, where he was consultant psychiatrist and joint medical director until 1974. He also had consulting rooms in Harley Street and Wimpole Street. He leaves his longstanding partner, Penny Buckland. [PENELOPE BUCKLAND]

Kenneth Gordon Dickinson



Former general practitioner Birmingham (b Birmingham 1928; q Birmingham 1951; DPM, FRCGP, DIH), died from ischaemic heart disease on 4 June 2002.

Kenneth Dickinson did his national service in the Royal Army Medical Corps in Malaya, attached to the SAS. He went on to become a singlehanded practitioner in Handsworth, Birmingham, a challenging role in a difficult inner city area. In 1970 he became medical officer at Birmingham University, where he developed and expanded the student health services. He retired from practice aged 60 to pursue his hobbies, such as trekking and sailing. While leading a party of walkers in Canada some six years ago he dissected his arch of aorta. Happily this was repaired successfully. He leaves his

first wife, Patricia; three children; two grandchildren; and his second wife, Mary. [A LLEWELYN LLOYD]

Victor Braham Goldman

Former general practitioner Lancing, Sussex (b Birmingham 1917; q Birmingham 1939), died from cerebral vascular disease on 20 August 2002.

In 1939 he volunteered for the Royal Army Medical Corps. He served in the British Expeditionary Force to France, in the Middle East, and in Italy, and completed six years in the military before professing that his main ambition was "to be a civilian." On returning to Birmingham he joined his brother Eric in general practice in Erdington. He moved to Lancing in West Sussex in 1962, where he ran a large singlehanded practice until retirement at 65. He continued to work as a locum GP in the Worthing area and also trained in hypnosis. He leaves a wife; two sons; and two granddaughters. [JON GOLDMAN]

George Gordon

Former reader in physiology Oxford University and emeritus fellow Brasenose College (b 1920; q Oxford 1943; DM), died from complications of renal failure on 11 May 2002.

George Gordon was elected a fellow of Brasenose College, Oxford, in 1948 and devoted himself to tutoring future medical and physiology students and to research on touch and pain pathways. His studies on lateral inhibition in the gracile and cuneate medullary nuclei remain central to our understanding of the principles of somatosensory physiology, as does his concept of "active touch," which gave the title to a 1978 volume he edited. This was remarkable for its multidisciplinary approach, reflecting his particularly broad view of neuroscience. He became a university reader in 1976 and retired from his fellowship in 1987. He leaves a wife, Peggy; and two children. [DEREK HOCKADAY, RICHARD BOYD]

Geoffrey David Phillips

Former general practitioner St Austell, Cornwall (b Redruth 1926; q St Bartholomew's Hospital, London, 1951), d 6 May 2002.

Geoffrey left school at the age of 15 and worked briefly as a mining surveyor before deciding to pursue a career in medicine. After several hospital posts, he found his vocation in general practice. Home visits and an understanding of the social context of illness were central to his philosophy. He served the people of St Austell for more than 30 years. For many years he was police surgeon and medical adviser to St John Ambulance. Outside medicine his main interests remained rugby football, Cornwall, and his

family. He leaves a wife, Ute; and two sons. [MARTIN PHILLIPS, PETER PHILLIPS]

Andrew Rutherford ("Ford") Simpson

General practitioner Hawick 1964-94 (b Hawick 1932; q Edinburgh 1962; DRCOG), d 14 August 2002.

Ford did house jobs at Edinburgh Royal Infirmary and Peel Hospital, Galashiels, and, after obstetric training in Dumfries, he returned to his home town of Hawick, where he joined his father in practice. He was a past chairman of the Scottish Borders division of the BMA and served on the Scottish Council for many years. After retiring he became a non-executive director of the Borders Community NHS Trust. A keen sportsman, he contributed a great deal to the local community as club doctor to Hawick rugby football club and as a church elder. He leaves a wife, Helen; three daughters; and six grandchildren. [C H OLIVER]

Edward Lorden Trickey

Former consultant orthopaedic surgeon London (b China 1920; q King's College, London, 1944; FRCS), d 17 April 2002.

Although he always remained a generalist, Lorden Trickey was one of the leading knee surgeons of his day. In 1957 he was made a consultant orthopaedic surgeon at Ashton-under-Lyne, returning to London in 1960, when he was invited to set up an orthopaedic and traumatic service at Edgware General Hospital, combined with a consultant post at the Royal National Orthopaedic Hospital and Institute of Orthopaedics, Stanmore. In the late 1960s he introduced arthroscopy to the Royal National Orthopaedic Hospital, taking himself off to Canada to learn the technique. He retired from the NHS in 1985, but continued as dean of the Institute of Orthopaedics until 1987. [J N WILSON]

Alan MacRae Whittington

General practitioner Ascot, Berkshire, 1950-83 (b Isleworth, Middlesex, 1920; q Cambridge/Middlesex Hospital 1946), d 4 August 2002.

Alan worked in ear, nose, and throat at the Middlesex Hospital and in the Royal Air Force during national service before entering general practice in Longridge, Lancashire. A southerner at heart, he took up a partnership in Ascot and remained in practice there until forced to retire by his first stroke at the age of 63. He retained his patience and sense of humour despite being denied an active retirement—his hobbies had been dinghy sailing, gardening (especially vegetables), cooking, his family, and his dogs. He leaves a wife, Ann; two sons; and five grandchildren. [TONY MORGAN]